

PREFACE

La Dame-du-bord-de-l'eau was published in 1988 by the Society of Ethnology, in Nanterre. It grew out of my doctoral dissertation, which I defended in 1983. The book consisted of two parts: an analysis of the legends of the goddess Chen Jinggu, the Lady of Linshui, through the “novel” (*xiaoshuo*) *Linshui pingyao zhuan*, and an ethnological presentation of my work in the field in Taiwan in 1979–80. There I “explored” the collection of legends about Chen Jinggu by following the clues presented by the first temple to Chen Jinggu on the island, in Tainan. The divinities there gave me a way to approach the novel: Chen Jinggu and her ritual sisters Lin Jiuniang and Li Sanniang, Zhusheng Niangniang, Cinnabar Cloud Great Sage, the Ladies of the thirty-six palaces of the king of Min, the god of the soil, and the guardians of the Bridge of a Hundred Flowers, over which the goddess rules. The first two chapters of that book analyzed the episodes that established the cult: the legend of Luoyang Bridge, the relation to Guanyin, and the division of the sexual categories that could be inferred from them, followed by the crucial episode of Chen Jinggu performing the ritual of “liberation from the womb” (*tuotai*). The second part presented the temple in Tainan. I discussed the principal rituals performed on behalf of women and children as I observed them there, and described the procedures of the “ritual masters” (*fashi*), “Red Head masters” (*Hongtou*) of the Mount Lü sect, the ritual tradition of which Chen Jinggu is the master. The final chapter was an encounter with the goddess through her medium in Tainan, Xie Fuzhu, who allowed me to observe her practice during my stay there. An inquiry into representations of the feminine as they appeared in this local cult, which arose in the Tang dynasty and was canonized in the Song, and which is still

very active today, guided this monograph. For this stage of my research, I want to express my thanks to K. Schipper, who, understanding the object of my thinking, opened before me this road. Academia Sinica of Taiwan made it possible for me spend a year in Tainan (1980) by inviting me as a Visiting Research Scholar. A “Cultural Regions” grant from the Ministry of Universities, in Paris, provided the means.

Since 1986, as a researcher at the CNRS, in the Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology (Université de Paris X, Nanterre), I have continued my field research in Fujian, the former country of Min, the place of origin of the cult of the Lady of Linshui and of the local tradition of the Mount Lü sect (*Lü Shan pai*). The places that the legends present are still identifiable there today, and the divine figures of the legends still receive offerings there. The mother temple, at Daqiao (in Gutian district in the north of the province), the temple in Fuzhou, and the temples in each district and village, were like so many open books recounting the myths of the kingdom of Min. The different layers of the cult and its relations to other local cults could be clearly read there. Observing the resurgence of the cults, and the unceasing rebuilding of temples that accompanied this resurgence, enabled me to analyze the “reinvention” of this ancient tradition, the “re-enchantment” carried out by its faithful in the context of the economic upheaval of modern China. The masters of the Mount Lü sect are also there and their practice is a choice site for understanding how a local ritual tradition develops and enriches itself thanks to its numerous borrowings over the centuries. In Fujian I met other mediums and the faithful of this cult, both men and women, who taught me a great deal. The republication of the *Mindu bieji* enabled me to re-situate the myths of Chen Jinggu in the global context of the region. The rehabilitation of the cult by the Chinese authorities and the research carried out by the Bureaus of Culture and Religion, which gave rise to two conferences (1993, 2003) and to publications with which I was associated, gave me an overview of the ensemble. I am indebted to Xu Gongsheng, the late Chen Zenghui, and Lin Jinshui, professors at the Higher Normal College in Fujian, for their hospitality in Fuzhou. Ma Xisha and Han Bingfang, professors at the Institute for Research into World Religions (Shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan), in Beijing, likewise generously supported me.

I participated in the Chinese Popular Culture Project organized at the University of California at Berkeley, in 1989, by David Johnson on the theme of *Rituals and Scriptures*, as did Michel Strickmann, whose subse-

quent death represents the loss of a great scholar and an original thinker. There, the enlightening views of Kenneth Dean, Gary Seaman, and Allen Chun, as well as those of Edward Davis and Bernard Faure, encouraged me to pursue this exploration. On that occasion, I had the chance to meet Phyllis Brooks and the late Edward Schafer, whose works on the kingdom of Min and on the Tang dynasty were particularly valuable to me. Later, my research in the field resulted in articles on rituals, talismanic writing, dreams as divinatory practice, and on the trance understood as a development of the self. I am very grateful to Philip Clart, Alison Marshall, Meir Shahar, and Robert Weller for sharing with me their own research and publications. I was considering publishing an annotated translation of the *Linshui ping-yao zhuan* to make available this wealth of local information, and thinking of writing another work on this cult, from the time of its inception up to the present day.

Then, in 2003, Bernard Faure, Kristin Ingrid Fryklund, and Mark Edward Lewis suggested translating *La Dame-du-bord-de-l'eau* for Stanford University Press. It seemed to me a shame to republish the same work without incorporating some of the research I had carried out in the meantime. But the problem was how to rework the old manuscript without turning it into another book; it was a challenge, but also an unexpected opportunity. I therefore decided to keep the outline and structure of the earlier work as I had conceived it at the time, and incorporate the research I had carried out in Fujian. The ideas gleaned over the years in the course of reading numerous works published since that time on other local cults, other divinities, and immortals (U. A. Cedzich, K. Dean, C. Despeux, Hsü Xiaowang, P. Katz, Lin Guoping, S. Sangren, Ye Mingsheng, Yü Chun-fang), on the period from the Tang to the Song (E. Davis, P. Ebrey, P. Gregory), on certain aspects of Daoism (J. Boltz, R. Hymes, D. Overmyer), on Buddhism (B. Faure, M. Strickmann), on mediums (P. Clart), on therapeutic traditions and medicine (C. Furth, E. Hsü), on pilgrimages (S. Naquin), on women, children, and gender studies (A. Behnke-Kinney, F. Bray, V. Caas, F. Héritier, A. Waltner) were a great help to me in this undertaking. It is of course impossible to mention all those to whom I am indebted for their work and publications. At the same time, my institutional affiliation with a laboratory of ethnology that takes a strictly comparative scientific approach privileging work in the field also influenced my work.

With the patience of Kristin Ingrid Fryklund and Mark Edward Lewis I thus rewrote the work chapter by chapter. Consequently, *The Lady of*

Linshui is not, strictly speaking, a translation of *La Dame-du-bord-de-l'eau*. Nor is it an entirely new book, either: the chapters have the same titles and the structure is the same. It is the same work, transformed from the inside out.

I especially want to thank Kristin Ingrid Fryklund for her translation. She captured the tone of the manuscript while carefully preserving the meaning. It was a pleasure to work with her. I am also grateful to Mark Edward Lewis for reading through the manuscript and for his many suggestions. I am indebted to Bernard Faure and Carl Bielefeldt for including this book in the series *Asian Religions and Cultures*. My first contact with Stanford University Press was with Muriel Bell. I want to thank Joa Suarez and Carolyn Brown for their efficiency and kindness, and Richard Gunde for meticulously going over the manuscript. I, of course, am solely responsible for the errors that remain.